United Nations S/2002/1176

Security Council

Distr.: General
21 October 2002
English
Original: French

Letter dated 18 October 2002 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 16 October 2002 from the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina addressed to the Secretary-General (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring this letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**

02-65137 (E) 221002 231002

Annex

Letter dated 16 October 2002 from the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

I have the pleasure to transmit to you the twenty-third report on the activities of the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is my first report to the Security Council.

I would like to thank you for your support and the support of your office in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(*Signed*) Paddy **Ashdown**

Enclosure

Report by the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement to the Secretary-General

8 May-11 October 2002

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1031 (1995) of 15 December 1995, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit reports from the High Representative in accordance with annex 10 of the Peace Agreement and the Conclusions of the London Peace Implementation Conference of 8 and 9 December 1995, I herewith present the twenty-third report.

Summary

1. I took over as High Representative on 27 May 2002. I have made clear that, building on the work of my predecessor, my aim, during my term of office, is to set Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) irreversibly on the road to statehood within the European Union (EU). My priorities are the rule of law and jobs — priorities that I strongly believe, not just from the evidence of opinion polls, but, more importantly from my contacts with people across the country, match those of the people of BiH. I have described my policy as "first justice, then jobs through reform". I am also working to improve the functioning and effectiveness of BiH's key governing institutions, and ensure that they can depend on more reliable funding arrangements. I have recently put forward proposals to this effect, under the overall heading "Making BiH Work".

2. We have started to make progress. In the area of rule of law, I am setting up a new Serious Crimes Unit (SCU) within my Office, to deal with crime and corruption and have begun the process of restructuring the BiH court system at all levels. I have also established a new Legal Reform Unit, established the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Councils, and set up a Special Chamber in the State Court and a Special Department in the BiH Prosecutor's Office.

3. On 23 September, the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) adopted the reform programme presented to them by the BiH authorities and the International Community (IC) agencies based in Sarajevo. Together with the economic targets endorsed on 31 July, these commitments for the Jobs and Justice agenda, which is binding on both the IC and present and future governments of BiH.

4. In the economic reform area, the State Law on Civil Aviation, the Entity Electricity Laws, the Federation Law on Concessions, the Entity Laws on Banks, and the State Veterinary Law have all been passed.

5. The Civil Service Law was imposed on 23 May and the first head of the Civil Service Agency, a Bosnian citizen, has been appointed.

6. Political life has been dominated by the 5 October elections, the first to be organized and run by the BiH authorities. They were peaceful and very well run. The fact that turnout was disappointing reflected disillusionment with repeated elections, the lack of time for governments in power to make a difference, a widespread frustration with the slow pace of change in BiH, and disenchantment with the political process in general. It was not, I believe, a vote for nationalism (the

votes of two of the three main nationalist parties went down). Instead, it was a protest against the lack of progress in implementing reform, which saw governing parties punished harshly by the electorate. Unfortunately, only 54.68 per cent of eligible voters went to the polls. Young people in particular did not vote.

7. The process of government formation at every level is now beginning, and I have made clear that the IC will judge incoming governments by their commitment to reform. The composition of the next government must be based on programmes and actions, rather than personalities and individuals. Accordingly, I have set out a number of tests by which we will be able to judge the seriousness of parties' intentions to implement key reforms.

Report

I. Introduction

1. This is my first report to the United Nations Secretary-General since taking over as High Representative on 27 May 2002. I will take the opportunity to set out my priorities for my term of office, as well as to review developments during the reporting period.

II. My priorities as High Representative

2. I said in my inaugural speech to the BiH Parliament that my goal as High Representative would be to set BiH irreversibly on the road to statehood within the EU, and that my priorities would be to achieve justice and jobs through reform.

3. From my first day in office, and building on the work of my distinguished predecessor, Wolfgang Petritsch, I have placed special emphasis on establishing the rule of law.

4. Without the rule of law, BiH has no prospect of attracting inward investment on a substantial scale, or of making progress in its ambitions to join the EU. There is a crucial relationship between establishing the rule of law and generating jobs which is not always as well appreciated as it needs to be both inside BiH, and indeed, within the rest of the Balkan region.

5. I fully intend to maintain the priority I have given to the rule of law. But I am also determined to move forward with economic reform at an increased pace, and with measures to improve the operational effectiveness of BiH's governing institutions, all under the general theme of Making BiH Work. We have no option but to increase the pace of reform.

6. Furthermore, on 23 September 2002, the BiH authorities, together with Political Directors of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) Steering Board, agreed on the "Jobs and Justice" agenda. This document is a contract between BiH and the IC and is binding on all BiH authorities. We have made it clear that we will expect all incoming governments to implement this reform agenda.

7. I said plainly to the people of BiH and their leaders that the country now has no option but to steepen the gradient of reform if it is not to get left behind by the rest of the region. There is a real risk of that happening if we cannot turn the dynamic of obstructionism into one of reform.

III. The rule of law

8. As I indicate above, I said when I arrived in Sarajevo that my priorities would be first justice, then jobs, through reform. Building on the work of my predecessor, we have made progress in the last few months. We have, for example, put the international community's efforts on a new footing, placing a new emphasis on the rule of law in the way we organize ourselves.

9. In summary, we have taken or are taking the following steps:

- We are setting up a new Unit to tackle crime and corruption, which, once fully operational, will work with local investigators to identify the lawbreakers and bring them to court.
- We have established a new Legal Reform Unit, headed, and almost entirely staffed by, Bosnians, to work with the BiH authorities on new laws to bring criminals to justice.
- We have begun, with the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the long-overdue process of restructuring the BiH court system at all levels, and ensuring that only capable and honest judges are allowed to administer justice in the future.
- We undertook to have the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council established by the autumn, and have done so.
- We promised to establish a special chamber in the State Court, and a Special Department in the BiH Prosecutor's Office. And we have kept that promise. The new State Court will be operational on 1 January 2003.
- And, in cooperation with UNMiBH/IPTF, we are making good progress on establishing the State Information Protection Agency, on certifying the police and on training special police units capable of taking on organized crime.

10. I set out below in greater detail the actions we have taken.

11. Shortly before he left, my predecessor, Mr. Petritsch, issued Decisions establishing the Law(s) on the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of BiH, the RS, and the Federation. These Councils are charged with the appointment of all judges and prosecutors in BiH, and are responsible for conducting disciplinary proceedings against judges and prosecutors.

12. In June 2002, my Office proposed to the BiH Parliament draft Laws to strengthen the criminal justice system by establishing Special Panels in the Criminal and Appellate Divisions in the Court of BiH for Organized Crime Economic Crime and Corruption. The Law on the Office of the Prosecutor of BiH with a Special Department for Organized Crime Economic Crime and Corruption was also proposed. Parliament was requested to adopt these essential tools against crime and corruption before summer recess. The Political Directors of the PIC Steering Board at their 31 July 2002 meeting also endorsed these goals.

13. I also put in place the Law on Amendments to the Law on Court of BiH, and the Law on the Office of the Prosecutor of BiH, in August 2002. In coordination with the national authorities, my Office's Criminal Investigation and Prosecutorial Reform Unit (CIPRU), aims to have these institutions established and functioning in early 2003. (Unfortunately, the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedures Code were before the BiH Parliamentary Assembly when time ran out before the elections.)

14. In mid-August IJC issued vacancy notices for positions in the restructured Court of the BiH, Prosecutor's Office of BiH, RS Supreme Court, RS Constitutional Court, RS Prosecutor's Office, Federation Supreme Court and the Federation Prosecutor's Office. At the time of writing, 276 applications had been received for some 100 positions. The domestic and international members of the High Judicial

and Prosecutorial Councils (HJPC), who took up their work on 2 September, will be charged with reselecting judges and prosecutors to these judicial posts.

15. In August, after consultation with the domestic authorities and prosecutors throughout the country, I issued Decisions harmonizing the prosecutorial systems in the Federation of BiH and its ten Cantons, as well as in the Republika Srpska. The Decisions set up a more efficient, professional and modern prosecutorial system across BiH by making it possible for prosecutors to specialize in specific types of cases.

16. On 23 September 2002, the BiH authorities presented a joint judicial reforms programme to the Political Directors of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC). Together with the economic reform targets agreed at the 30 July meeting (discussed below), this programme forms the "jobs and justice" agenda, and represents the contract on rule of law matters between BiH and the IC. Key pledges include:

- Ensuring respect for the Rule of Law by Government and Parliament
- Creating a legal framework based on an integrated justice system that works in the interests of citizens and business
- Fully supporting an efficient and effective justice system
- Giving the criminal justice system (police officers, prosecutors, and judges) the tools to fight crime and corruption.

IV. Jobs

17. There is no doubt that BiH faces a number of serious economic problems. Donor contributions are falling, foreign and domestic debt is increasing, and there is little or no foreign investment to fill the gap. By next Spring, BiH could be in the grip of a severe domestic debt crisis. The country is racing against time, and there is no choice but to increase the pace of economic reform.

18. A great deal of important work has been done in the past few months. The State Law on Civil Aviation, the Entity Electricity Laws, the Federation Law on Concessions, the Entity Laws on Banks, and the State Veterinary Law have all been passed. But, BiH still needs a number of others, including the Law on Communications, the Law on Statistics, and the Law on Land Registry Books.

19. On 30 July 2002, the BiH authorities and IC organizations based in Sarajevo, represented by my Office, presented a joint economic reform programme to the Political Directors of the PIC Steering Board. In response to the poor state of the BiH economy, with low salaries, high unemployment and a lack of future prospects for young people, representatives of the Council of Ministers, along with both Entity Prime Ministers, committed their governments to undertaking a broad range of specific measures. These measures are intended to:

- improve the business environment
- make the government more efficient
- guarantee the free movement of goods, people, services and capital in order to establish a single economic space

- deliver high-quality utilities and public services
- provide an affordable safety net for the elderly and vulnerable.

20. The programme sets out specific objectives and milestones that the government at both State and Entity levels will strive to achieve, with coordinated international support, and represents the "contract" on economic matters between BiH and the IC.

21. The process of economic reform and institution building continues to face many challenges, particularly in the RS. Continued opposition by RS politicians to the establishment of a single economic space in BiH has continued to represent an obstacle not only to the development of the Entity itself, but also to BiH as a whole. Furthermore, under the current system, politicians, even when excluded from political functions as a result of Decisions, can continue to exercise political influence through economic activities such as control of public companies in strategic sectors.

22. However, concrete progress has been made in a number of areas during the reporting period. These include:

Tax and Fiscal Structure

23. Following the introduction of the excise tax allocation mechanism and removal of double excise taxation in July 2002, it became easier and less costly for wine and beer producers (and other manufactures and traders in excisable goods) to do business inside BiH.

Electric power

24. A major milestone in successful completion of the reform of electricity sector has been passed with the completion of the legal framework. As mentioned above, the state level law, the Act on Transmission of Electric Power, Regulator and System Operator of BiH as well as both FBiH and RS Electricity laws were adopted during the reporting period.

25. These laws must now be implemented. The first step in that process is the formation of several state and entity regulatory agencies. The development and implementation of this new regulatory system for the new industry and market arrangements is critical for long-term success. The public, as well as private business, should also benefit from lower electricity costs.

Telecommunications

26. Since submission of the last report, my Office has worked to increase legal certainty in the sector and create favourable conditions for future privatization. The regulator for telecommunications and broadcasting, the Communications Regulatory Agency, issued licenses to all three fixed line network operators and providers of network facilities in June 2002, thereby determining their rights and obligations in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner. The issuance of the countrywide licenses is also an important step towards establishing a single economic space in this market since it allows the operators to provide their services throughout the whole country. Competition should result in reduced costs for both businesses and individuals.

Transportation

27. With efforts to rehabilitate the transportation infrastructure now largely completed, attention is now turning towards establishing the necessary legal and regulatory frameworks required to manage operations in a competitive market. My Office, in cooperation with the local authorities and international financial institutions, has established working groups for the development of new state level railway and road laws. An amendment to the aviation law enabling more efficient management structure for the Department of Civil Aviation, passed in August 2002, will help to improve the working of this important regulatory body and its transition from military to civilian control on 31 December 2002.

28. Finally, the International Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin was finalized on 6 September in Brcko. This agreement will regulate all aspects of sustainable water management including equitable utilization of the waters, navigation, provision of water in sufficient quantity and of appropriate quality, protection of aquatic ecosystems, protection against detrimental effects of water, and effective control of the water regime. As part of the Agreement, the parties shall establish an International Sava River Basin Commission.

Public Administration Reform

29. During the reporting period, we have continued efforts to eliminate patronage and establish a professional, apolitical and merit-based civil service sector in accordance with European standards. Immediately after the State-level Civil Service Law was imposed on 23 May 2002, the Council of Ministers confirmed the appointment of the first Head of the Civil Service Agency, a Bosnian citizen. My Office is working closely with other partners of the IC and the domestic authorities to make the new Agency fully operational as soon as possible.

30. In close cooperation with the domestic authorities, I have also started to look at how to implement fully some of the most difficult aspects of the 19 April 2002 constitutional amendments in the area of public administration. A special expert-level working group has been set up which started to discuss ways of introducing proportional representation of all constituent peoples in all public institutions and ministries at the level of both Entities and below (since the Civil Service Law and the Civil Service Agency apply only to the State institutions of BiH).

31. In my inaugural speech to the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, I outlined my view that the absence of rule of law, in particular as it relates to financial crime and corruption, poses the single most serious threat to the economic and social welfare of BiH. Soon after my arrival, I faced a practical demonstration of the seriousness of the problem, and its implications for both public life and economic activity in BiH, in the form of the so-called "Am-Sped Affair".

32. This financial scandal, which involved the fraudulent transfer of KM 1.7 million (approximately US$ 800,000) of public funds into private hands, left me with no option but to remove Federation Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Nikola Grabovac from office on 14 June 2002. Although the Decision in no way reflects criminal responsibility, since Grabovac has the right to due process before the courts, he had clearly failed to exercise his political responsibility to supervise actively his Ministry and perform the duties of Minister of Finance effectively.

V. The Political Environment

33. Throughout the reporting period, the 5 October elections and preparations for them dominated political life in BiH.

34. By 18 May, the deadline for applications, 57 political parties, nine coalitions, and three independent candidates had registered to participate in the elections.

35. These elections were the first to be organized and run by the BiH authorities rather than the OSCE. They did so extremely successfully. The elections were efficiently organized and almost wholly free of violence.

36. The peaceful and orderly conduct of the election itself was praised by the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which observed the entire process from campaign to counting. The BiH Election Commission functioned well, and is an example of BiH institution at its best.

37. In the run up to polling day, international representatives in BiH, including myself, put a great deal of effort into encouraging electors to turn out and vote. I travelled the length and breadth of the country with a Get Out the Vote message.

38. In the event, turnout — at 54.68 per cent, compared to 64.4 per cent in 2000 — was not as high as we would have wished. Young people in particular did not vote.

39. Representatives of the nationalist SDA, SDS, and the HDZ, won the Bosniak, Serb, and Croat seats in the three-member BiH Presidency. At the State level, and in the elections for the Entity parliaments, the HDZ and SDS saw their vote drop slightly, while the SDA increased its vote by five percentage points. The SDP, which was the central party in the Alliance that had governed at State and Federation level, lost the biggest share of votes when it dropped from 27.3 per cent to 16.2 per cent.

40. Much has been made of these results, which have been widely seen, especially in the international press, as a swing back to nationalism. I do not share that analysis, for a number of reasons.

41. I believe that the low turnout represented a protest vote or, more accurately, a protest non-vote at the slow pace of reform in BiH, directed above all at punishing the parties that have been in government for the last two years.

42. But it was not a vote for a return to the nationalism of a decade ago. The situation in the rest of the region — while still prone to bouts of instability — is dramatically different. Milosevic and Tudjman are gone, and the apparatus over which they presided are all but dismantled. Of the three main nationalist parties contesting the BiH elections, two — on the figures available at the time of writing — saw their votes decline, and it looks as if the overall vote for nationalist parties will be lower than at the last elections. BiH voters are, of course, far from unique in punishing a reformist government at the polls: that has been the pattern across most of central and eastern Europe. Ironically, BiH's last government was voted out not for being too radical in pursuing reform, but not radical enough.

43. I am convinced — from my extensive travels around the country — that most people in BiH desperately want what most people everywhere want: a job, decent schools and hospitals, the rule of law, and a public administration that functions properly and serve the people. They are frustrated at the slow pace of change, and disillusioned with their political leaders of every hue. One encouraging sign,

however, is that this election was not dominated by nationalism, but by reform. That was the theme of all the main parties' messages, not nationalism.

44. The — perhaps lengthy — process of government formation at every level is now beginning. I have made clear that the international community will judge incoming governments by their commitment to genuine reform; we will assess performance by deeds, not words. The formation of the next governments must focus on programmes and actions, not personalities and individuals. I have made clear that the old parties have a huge job to do to convince a widely skeptical audience — both within BiH and outside — that they are serious about reform.

45. I strongly believe that role of the international community in the coming weeks should be to spell out clearly the sort of changes this country needs if it is to attract foreign investment and one day meet the standards for European Union membership.

46. I have set out six "tests of seriousness" by which we will be able to judge parties' commitments to reform. These include:

- Reform the Council of Ministers to give us stable, effective government
- Reform the revenue system by beginning the process of establishing VAT at the State level and reforming customs
- Reform the political system by establishing Parliamentary Commissions to act as "ethics watchdogs"
- Reform the business environment by rationalizing taxation within BiH borders
- Reform the criminal justice system by making the State Court operational by 31 December and by supporting newly appointed judges and prosecutors
- Reform the public service by adopting and implementing civil service laws and ensuring that civil service appointments are merit based.

Recent Decisions

47. In an effort to clear the way for a new beginning after these elections, and to finish the work of the last government, I issued a number of Decisions on 6 October. Among them were amendments to the immunity laws which will bring BiH practices in line with European standards by restricting the scope of the immunity provisions, and ensuring that they can only be invoked in respect to actions carried out strictly in the scope of official duties. The amendments also limit the number of officials covered by immunity. I took care to announce this step, as part of my commitment to improving ethics and responsibility in public life, before the results of the elections were known, in order to any suggestion that the changes were aimed at a particular politician or political grouping.

48. I also gave the force of law to the constitutional amendments agreed by political parties during my predecessor's tenure in March 2002, and imposed in April in both the Federation and the RS. The Cantonal Governments have now been brought into line with the Constitutional Court's July 2000 ruling.

Security and Defence

49. In spite of the uncertainty of the pre-election period, my Office has made a number of advances in the Security and Defence area. Better coordination with both

the Armed Forces of BiH and the IC has been achieved through the merger of my Office's Military Cell with the Department of Security Cooperation at the OSCE Mission in BiH. One major accomplishment was the reduction in the Entity Armed Forces, which was driven by the OSCE with full International Monetary Fund (IMF) support. The Federation Armed Forces are now at 13,200, and the RS Armed Forces will be at their new level of 6,600 by early 2003, as mandated by the BiH Defence Policy Document. Further work continues to ensure the Armed Forces of both entities are affordable and appropriately manned.

50. In addition, following the Presidency decision on the revised Standing Committee on Military Matters (SCMM) structures, including the establishment of the position of Secretary General, a Secretariat and Military Commission, a great deal of work continues on terms of reference and mechanisms for state level defence. Ultimately, with the cooperation of the new Presidency, these efforts should bring BiH a step closer to its ultimate goal: participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme.

51. Finally, a new three-person De-mining Commission as well as a new Director of the BiH Mine Action Centre has been appointed. This is good news for the development of BiH's Mine Action Strategy.

Srebrenica

52. On 11 July 2002, I attended the commemoration of the 7th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre in Srebrenica-Potocari. The event took place at the site of the planned memorial and cemetery for the victims of the July 1995 Srebrenica massacre. The first sample of the headstone was laid and unveiled at the site.

53. The Foundation of Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery continues to work with the Family Associations to implement the development of the designated site. I am strongly committed to these efforts and to continuing to chair the Executive Board of this Foundation, established during my predecessor's time in office.

54. My Office continues to support and coordinate work on the memorial project. On 9 July 2002 a tender for the concept design and construction was published, and on 18 September the Executive Board approved the concept design as agreed by the Selection Jury. A groundbreaking ceremony — a private occasion involving religious officials and members of the Families — took place on 11 October.

BiH in the Region

55. On 15 July, the first Summit of the Heads of State of BiH, the Republic of Croatia (RC) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) took place in Sarajevo. This meeting was an important step towards regional cooperation, and concluded with a joint declaration by the three Presidents reaffirming, inter alia, the principles of inalterability of the borders, constructive support for BiH's statehood and further improvements in regional cooperation.

56. A series of high-level exchanges took place during the reporting period. These included Foreign Minister Lagurndzija's 14 September meeting in New York on the margins of UNGA, with his counterparts from Croatia and the FRY. In addition, on 17 June in Sarajevo, BiH and Croatia signed a Treaty on co-location providing the legal framework for the functioning of jointly operated border-crossing points. This

development enabled the long-awaited opening of the border crossing of Kostajnica. Similar negotiations continue between BiH and the FRY on pending issues related to the State border (leading, for example, to the initiating of an agreement on the determination of border crossings) and the draft agreement on dual citizenship. Against this background, the statement attributed to President Kostunica at a rally in Mali Zvornik on 7 September, during the election campaign for the Serbian Presidency, according to which the Republika Srpska was only temporarily separated from Serbia, was highly regrettable. I drew attention to the clear commitments made by the Yugoslav authorities, including President Kostunica himself during his Sarajevo visit, to BiH's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Secretary General of the Council of the European Union and High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Dr. Solana, also made a statement in which he underlined the inviolability of BiH's borders and the importance of ensuring that its sovereignty and territorial integrity were fully respected.

International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY)

57. In May 2002, a team of four experts in the field of war crimes hired by my Office issued their report identifying the Court of BiH (the State court) as the suitable domestic institution to deal with war crimes cases either referred from ICTY or initiated domestically. The consultants made specific recommendations and suggestions both in terms of legislation as well as practical aspects to enable the Court to fulfil this task. CIPRU will be working to implement the report's recommendations, including the establishment of an International Humanitarian Law Division within the Court of BiH. My overall reform strategy, and implementation of the rule of law targets, will ensure that ICTY's current concerns with the BiH judicial system with respect to war crimes prosecutions will be addressed.

VI. Returns

58. The number of refugees returning continues at a high level. According to UNHCR statistics, the total of registered returns to and within BiH has risen in the course of 2002 from around 820,000 to well over 880,000. The total for the first seven months of 2002 is higher than for the same period in 2001, promising an overall number of returns equivalent to, if not higher than, the nearly 100,000 registered by UNHCR in 2001. The fact that more real people are deciding to return home is an important sign of the success of the Return and Reconstruction Task Force (RRTF), co-chaired by my Office and UNHCR.

59. The Property Law Implementation (PLIP) statistics have risen from a 2001 total of 49 per cent of claims implemented in December last year, to nearly 60 per cent resolved by the month of August, i.e., nearly twice as many as last year, with another four months to go. However, with well over 100,000 property claimants still denied return to their homes, nearly seven years after the Dayton Peace Accords, the PLIP agencies (UNHCR, OHR, OSCE, Commission for Real Property Claims, UNMiBH) launched a New Strategic Direction on 12 September 2002. This initiative demands stricter adherence to the property laws: notably greater transparency in claims processing, respect for the legal requirement for chronological processing of claims, and a tougher line on evictions.

60. There is a strong regional dimension to the returns issue. Currently, 21,000 Croatian Serbs with refugee status are still present in BiH, in many cases occupying Bosniac- or Croat-claimed property in the RS. Their return to Croatia is prevented by the continuing lack of facilitating property legislation in that country — in particular the lack of legislation enabling the return of socially owned property. This population is an added burden on the BiH authorities, since it adds to their already pressing obligations to provide alternative accommodation for people who must leave claimed property, in accordance with the property laws. My Office continues to work to convince the Croatian government of the urgent need to ensure the rights of this refugee population are honoured in the same way as we have required of the BiH authorities.

VII. United Nations Mission in BiH (UNMiBH)

61. I would like to take this opportunity, as the United Nations Mission in BiH (UNMiBH) prepares to complete its mandate at the end of this year, to place on record my Office's warm appreciation for its dedication to the cause of peace in BiH over many years; for their staunch support to our joint endeavours; and for the personal contribution of the outgoing SRSG Jacques Paul Klein. UNMiBH is the first United Nations mission in BiH to complete its mandate, which included police certification, accreditation, expansion of the State Border Service to take full control of BiH's borders, and unification of the Mostar city police. Our work to build a permanent peace in BiH would simply not have been possible without the contribution of the United Nations Mission in this country.